

Town Meeting Coordinating Committee
Minutes of Thursday, August 18, 2011
1st Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall

Present: Peggy Roberts, Mary Streeter, Nonny Burack, Carol Gray, Adrienne Terrizzi
Absent: Harry Brooks, Patricia Holland
Other Attending: John Musante, Town Manager

Call to order by Chair Peggy Roberts at 1:05 pm.

1. Meeting with John Musante: The Town Manager responded to questions provided in advance of the meeting.

What can be done to improve public participation in deciding budget priorities? John wants the budget page on the town website to be the ‘go to page.’ He suggested a one page version of key budget meetings where the public would have input, as well as publicizing the October 13th four-board meeting as a precursor to the budget via sources e.g. the TMCC website and a banner announcement on the town website’s home page. The Town Clerk has dedicated the bulletin board outside her office where those without computers would have this information available. A request for live broadcast of BCG meetings will be discussed when he meets with Jim Lescault at Amherst Media. The four-board meeting is among meetings available on tape and on-demand.

Do you have suggestions on how to help TM members understand the budget better? The Town Manager said that he receives budget policy guidelines from the Select Board (SB) in October. All SB meetings are live broadcast. In addition to his earlier suggestions (above) as helpful to TM members, he suggests promotion of those opportunities, encouraging signing up for the town’s subscription service notification for SB and Library Trustee meetings and frequent use/sourcing of the town website’s budget page. Public hearings on the budget are publicized and held yearly, offering TM and residents the opportunity to comment. He asked if the budget is discussed during precinct meetings, to which the response was negative; warrant articles typically drive meeting discussions. One of his ideas is to inform the general public on the basics of where the town spends its money and to include that information in a mailing with the real estate tax bills. Ideas for him included doing a public service announcement on how to get involved in town government and another of where our money goes.

There was a suggestion that a column by the Town Manager in the newspaper or short announcements on Amherst Media might be helpful in informing the public on town issues. He has recently appeared on Channel 12 Neighbor to Neighbor and Conversation programs and is now doing a weekly radio interview on WHAI 98.3 at 7:50 am.

How can we help you? John noted communication as key, and as the TMCC master calendar gets refined, to not duplicate that of the BCG, to distill it to one page, and to advertise meetings of all boards and committees.

The Town Manager took notes throughout the meeting and also responded to several other questions. Peggy asked about ongoing issues of sound quality in the Town Room, which he has plans to pursue with Kris Pacunas and Jim Lescault. He was also encouraged to consult with an acoustic engineer. She also asked if funds would be available for two additional portable microphones for TM sessions.

2. Calendar Subcommittee: Mary reported on the work of the Master Calendar subcommittee and provided draft handouts of the Master Calendar of Town Meeting Related Events and accompanying letter on how TM members can influence town affairs and participate in budget and zoning articles. Feedback included format modifications, legibility, bolding and the use of color coding; editorial changes to the letter to be done by Carol and Adrienne will be submitted to the subcommittee for their consideration. It was noted that these will be mailed to all TM members along with the final fourth quarter budget report, slated for the first week of October.

3. Preparing for Fall Town Meeting

- **Fall Information Forum:** Following a discussion of possible topics, no action was taken. TMCC agreed to postpone decision until further into the pre-Town Meeting season. The Planning Board plans to undertake a 'Form Based Zoning' information session.
- **Packet Information:** Decision on what TMCC will include in the 1st mailing due to go out on October 14: Warrant Review (October 20, 7pm), bus tour (Sunday, October 30, 2-4 pm), precinct meeting dates and a reminder that all 240 town meeting seats will be up for re-election in the Spring.
- **Precinct Meetings:** Established for Monday, October 25 through Saturday, November 6. Specific precinct dates to be made and facilitators contacted.
- **Auditorium Facilities:** Adrienne reported on an email from Aaron Hayden, TMCC liaison, who met with Brian Eccelstone and Jim Lescault to work out sound quality issues in the ARMS auditorium. The group worked out several areas of concern largely via equipment balance among microphones, reduction of background noise, gooseneck mics for the Moderator and podium and a number of other adjustments.

4. Schedule of TMCC Meetings: Monday, August 29 and September 13, 1-3pm

5. Acceptance of the Minutes of June 13 and July 12, 2011 were postponed.

The meeting adjourned at 3:10pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Adrienne Terrizzi
Approved October 6, 2011

Documents Provided:

- 1] Agenda
- 2] TMCC Draft Letter and Master Calendar for 2011-2012
- 3] Special Town Meeting Checklist, Revised 8/1/11